Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA)

Reference: Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.), Section 9902(i)

If your installation is downsizing or closing, employees who are not eligible for optional retirement may qualify for early retirement under the Department of Defense (DoD) Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) if their voluntary separation would reduce the number of employees who would otherwise be separated involuntarily. VERA may also be used as a tool to restructure the workforce at installations that are not facing personnel reductions.

To qualify for VERA, you must be at least 50 years of age with at least 20 years of creditable service, or you must have completed 25 years of service at any age. These requirements apply whether you are covered under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). However, if you accept VERA while covered under the CSRS, your annuity is reduced by 2 percent for every year of age under 55.

You’re eligible for VERA if you’re serving under an appointment without time limitation and were employed by the Department continuously for more than 30 days before your installation’s decision to reduce or restructure the workforce was approved. You’re ineligible if you’ve received a decision notice of involuntary separation for misconduct or unacceptable performance, or a specific RIF separation notice.

If there is a need to reduce or restructure the workforce, your installation may offer VERA to all eligible employees or it may target specific groups of employees. The targeted groups may be identified on the basis of factors such as organizational unit, job series or grade, geographic area, skills, or other factors. It’s important to understand that VERA is not an entitlement. Regardless of eligibility, employees who are interested in VERA may not have the opportunity to apply. Even if your installation solicits VERA applications and you’re in the targeted group, there may be more applicants than available offers. If this occurs, offers are made in seniority order based on the applicants’ leave service computation dates.

Employees approved for VERA must normally be off the rolls on or before the effective date of the RIF. However, employees who won’t be eligible for VERA by the RIF effective date may be allowed to use annual leave to stay on the rolls long enough to reach retirement eligibility (see the Extended Employment for Retirement and/or Health Benefits Fact Sheet). Since VERA can be offered in combination with Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay (VSIP), you should also understand that you’re not eligible for the extended employment benefit if you accept VSIP.

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